

ANABAPTISM CONSIDERED.

Wherein the chief Objections of that
Sect against Infant-Baptism, and the
manner of Baptizing by Aspersion,
or Sprinkling, are fairly stated and
answered ;

A N D

REASONS given why Dipping is not to
be taken as the essential or necessary Mode
of Administration.

*In a familiar Letter of Advice to a Parishioner incli-
ning that way.*

By William Eratt, M. A. and Minister of
Hatfield near Doncaster.

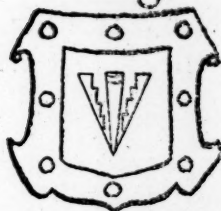
Gal. 4. 16, 17. *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell
you the truth? they zealously affect you, but not well.*

Prov. 14. 15. *The simple believeth every word, but the prudent
man looketh well to his going.*

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. B. for A. and J. Churchill. And for
Robert Clark in York. MDCC.

Lord Cremes
Charity



Durham, England

Neighbour Woodward,

I Must needs say (and complain too)
you have been unjust to your self, and
unkind to me as your Minister, in not think-
ing me worthy of being consulted in your spi-
ritual Concerns, (as to which I am given
to understand, you have lately been under
some Scruples, doubting of the Truth of your
former Profession in the Communion of the
Church of England, and seeming to incline
to the Anabaptists Persuasion.) Now to set
you at rights herein, the Errand of this is to
acquaint you, that I look upon it as a Duty
incumbent upon me, to give you the best Ad-
vice I can (though not desired) in this your
grand Affair, the Welfare of your Soul.

Pray then, let not the Length of my Let-
ter affright you, for it is honestly intended
for your good; and I hope it will prove so,

be but you as easie and sincere in the Perusal as I was in the Writing of it: And if my little pains taken herein do but satisfie your Scruples, and bring you home to our Mother the Church, from whence you were unadvisedly straying, I shall think my self plentifully rewarded, who am, without Disimulation,

Your loving Friend

and Minister,

Jan. 9. 1⁶⁹⁹₇₀₀.

William Eratt.

A N A-

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CONSIDERED, &c.

J. W.

I Am apt to think, your rassi separating your self from the Church wherein you were baptized and bred up, is a Case, when well examined, you will not easily answer, either before God or Man, for all the new Light you so much (as I hear) now boast of; for as our Saviour speaks in the Gospel, *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Matt. 6. 23.

You are pleas'd to say, you have been hitherto in Errour and Darkness; but however that be, are you now infallibly sure of your being in the right way? This Principle of Popish Infallibility (I presume) you will hardly pretend to, for that favours too much of the blind Zeal and Enthusiasm of *Ignatius Loyola* the Founder of the *Jesuits*. If then 'tis possible for a Man to be mistaken (though himself believes otherwise) and if Zeal does not always prove the best cause; for as *St. Paul* affirms of some of the *Romans* that they had a Zeal of God, but not according to Knowledge; from hence then I gather, there may be an erroneous Conscience, that is, a Man may be zealously affected in an ill matter. Rom. 10. 2.

Not to instance herein Examples of former Times, we have modern ones sufficient.

1. As to the Case of the *Papists*, they're infallibly sure of being in the right, and all others in the wrong; and that there is no Salvation out of the Communion of their Church.

2. As to the *Quakers*, they are as confident of their way, that they are inwardly taught of God by his Spirit; and yet, I dare say, for all the Zeal of the one, or the other, you will easily agree with me, they are both grossly mistaken in matters of Religion and Religious Worship.

From

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From what has been said, I thus argue; That a confident Zeal is not always an Assurance of Truth being there; and (this premised) give me leave to tell you what a Lover of Truth ought to do, suppose he has some Scruples upon him that he has been in a wrong way. In this Case, a scrupulous Conscience should take especial care to inform it self these two ways.

1. Examine into the Validity of those Scruples that seem to dissuade him from the Profession he has lived in.

2. If after all his Searches after Truth, his Scruples do still grow upon him, and he cannot satisfy himself to continue in his former Profession; in the next place, a Wise-man, and a prudent Christian, should by all due ways and means examine into the truth and safety of the new way he intends to make choice of; else, though the way he has been in (as he fancies) is not good, yet so may it fall out, he may take a worse.

1. then, A prudent Christian, who is a Lover of Truth, should by all due ways and means examine into the Validity of those Scruples that seem to dissuade him from the Profession he has lived in. Inconstancy, in any one, argues a Weakness, inasmuch that the Wise-man urgeth us, *not to meddle with them that are given to change*; and 'tis excellent Advice which the Apostle St. Paul gives, *to hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*. And the same Apostle begs of Roman Converts, *to beware of following those who occasion Schisms or Divisions in the Church of God*; I beseech you, Brethren, *mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*.

Now who those are who have always been for dividing the Members of Christ's Body, hear the Character of them given, the 2 Tim. 3. 6, 7. *Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*.

To bring the Matter home to our present purpose, you see how dangerous a thing it is to be guilty of Heresie or Schism. If you had then been a Lover of Truth and of Peace, you ought first to have consulted me as your Minister, and laid before me your Scruples, e'er you had openly dissented from the Communion of the Church. You ought to shew me from the holy Scriptures, the Standard of Truth, wherein the Terms of our Communion are unlawful;

Prov. 24.
21.

Heb. 10.
23.

Rom. 16.
17.

lawful; what Doctrines they are our Church maintains and teaches, which are contrary to the Word of God. Will you try and condemn the Church you have been baptiz'd and brought up in, without hearing what she has to say for her self? It is against the Law of Nations to condemn any Person (*indicti causa*) before his Cause is heard: and to caution you by the way, you are to be very careful in your enquiry of the Doctrines taught in the Sacred Writ, and not to pass your Judgment rashly in favour of this or that Opinion in contradiction to the received Doctrines and constant Practice of the Church of God since the time of Christ and his Apostles; for I must tell you, that the worst of Hereticks, in all Ages, have pleaded Scripture in behalf of their Erroneous Principles: the *Socinians*, the *Antinomians*, the *Deists*, and the very *Atheists* themselves, have something to alledge out of Holy Writ in the defence of their naughty Cause. Now how this comes to pass, St. Peter gives us to understand, 2 Pet. 3. 16. that *the unlearned and unstable do wrest the holy Scriptures to their own destruction.*

I beg of you therefore for Christ's sake, and for your own Soul's sake, not to be of the number of those who are, as the Apostle affirms, *Children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the flight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive.* Eph. 4. 14.

'Tis a hard matter to think you shou'd have liv'd to these years and yet have your Religion to seek: the meaning of Religion is, to bind us up to the performance of our Duty towards God and towards Man; and in this respect our Church is not wanting in giving sufficient Rules and Directions, do we but follow them; and if we do not, 'tis our own faults, not the Churches. In this way you have been brought up, and herein Christian prudence doth oblige you to continue, till you be assured of a better, and shewn where it is; and that falls next under our Consideration: Namely,

2. That a prudent Christian shou'd not upon some nice Scruples forsake the Religion he has been brought up in, until he has Assurance given of a better: and no prudent Man would change for the worse. *All is not Gold that glisters.* We ought to try before we trust: and he must be a very weak Man that will change his Religion at the first sight of another offered in its stead, before he has examin'd the Truth of it.

Now to come to the matter in hand, you are persuaded to leave the Communion of the Church of England, and to join with the
Anabaptists,

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Anabaptists, and why? For Conscience sake, you say, that way being, as you think, the better, and the more for your Soul's health: But then there shou'd go two words to a Bargain; and 'tis but common Prudence and Justice to your old Religion, to examine wherein the new one is better. Now to put you in a right way of Examination, the Question will be, Wherein is ~~your~~ new Persuasion better than my old Profession? The Answer, according to Scripture and Reason, is, it is purer in Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship.

But then we must go on to Particulars, and Examine from Scripture and Reason the Truth of the matter. Now I do say, it lies upon you to shew me, wherein the Purity of this new way excels the old one in the aforementioned respects, and you are to keep to your old way till that be done: And this, in the name of God and Christ, I demand of you to do, as you will Answer the contrary at the great Tribunal. You are oblig'd hereto upon two accounts;

1. With regard to your own Soul, should this new way prove a false one.

2. With regard to the Souls of others, who may be led into Error by your Example.

I shall be glad to have your answer, and desire that it may be in the Spirit of meekness, as coming from one who seeks after the Truth, and (when found) is willing to embrace the same and to stand to it: Our Church has still the best right to you. You have not as yet, I hope, renounced your Baptism, and the true Mother will not agree with the Harlott to divide; but if you are resolved right or wrong to forsake the Church, at least do not abuse her: Pray then let your answer be modest and free from Cavil.

Now I must needs tell you, that did I doubt of the way I am in (as I thank God I do not) of all the several Persuasions among Christians the *Anabaptists* would be farthest from my thoughts or joyning to, and that for these Reasons.

1. With respect to those Persons who were the first Broachers of this Sect in the City of *Munster* in *Germany*, about the Year of our Lord 1533. viz. *John Matthias*, *Jo. Buckhold* (alias *Jo. of Iyden*) *Mancer*, *Knipper-dolling*, *Nicholas Stokius*, *Knippenbury*, and others, their first Reformers, whose Persuasion was founded in Blood; they raised a Sedition in the City, seized on

the Magistrates, degraded the Senate, and set up their own Ring-leaders, plunder'd all places sacred and profane. *John Matthias* being kill'd in a Skirmish, *Knipperdoling* pretended a Revelation, that *Buckhold* must be exalted to royal Dignity, and to the eternal Throne of his Father *David*; and having his *Regalia* put on him, he had a Throne built him in the Market-place, and was called the King of Justice, and of the *New Jerusalem*. *Buckhold* openly, before the People, made a mock Sacrament, gave every one an unleavened Loaf, saying, *Take, eat, and celebrate the Lord's death*. He had three Wives, which were called his Queens; one of which, who had been a Glover's Wench, happening to offend him, he struck off her Head in the Market-place, charging her with Adultery: in the mean time his other two pretended Queens sung a blasphemous Hymn, beginning with *Glory be to God on high*. Whilst these wicked Reformers were for two years together carrying on their seditious and base Designs, several thousand Souls perished in the City by Famine and the Sword: but I forbear saying any more of those sad Varlets, those lewd Reformers, who never learn'd this way of reforming from Christ or his Apostles. And now let us see what Doctrines they taught. And can we expect to gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles?

2. Then with respect to their Doctrines: they taught, that Christ was not the true God; that we are righteous by our own Merits and Sufferings; that there is no original Sin; that Infants are not to be baptized; they maintained Poligamy, that a Man may put away his Wife if of another Religion; that the Godly should enjoy a Monarchy upon Earth; and that any Man may Preach and give the Sacraments. These and such like were their pernicious and fulsome Doctrines, which 'tis a shame to mention amongst Christians.

To all this I expect as short an Answer as was given lately to the Reverend Mr. *Wesley's* Book of the Sacraments, by one of that Party at *Epsworth*, *It is all Lies*: But if the Truth hereof be denied, I can bring in a cloud of Writers of that time in testimony of what has been said, of several Nations and several Persuasions. If they are now ashamed of some of their Primitive Doctrines, I'm glad of it; but however, hence I think I may justly infer, that if the Fountain-head of this Sect was so corrupt, the Streams flowing thence cannot be very pure: And it must be supposed an intolerable foul way I was in, should I leave it to follow those Men.

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3. With

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3. With respect to the present way of the *Anabaptists* managing their Disputes, I should not be very inclinable to be of that Persuasion; for their usual way is, to speak or write more against their Adversaries, than in the Merits of their own Cause: And this to me seems an Argument of a bad one, when a Man by way of Subterfuge is forc'd to fly in his Adversaries face, when he has little to say in his own defence: And for once the Party must not take it ill if I serve 'em in their own sawce. Well then,

I must ask them, How they can, with any face of Authority, call themselves a Church? for, pray whence had they their Ministry? for, as the Apostle argues *Rom. 10. 15.* *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him on whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?* and in *Hebr. 5. 4.* the same Apostle declares, with respect to the Ministerial Function, that *no man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* 'Tis plain our Saviour first chose twelve Apostles, and gave 'em Power, by Prayer and Imposition of hands, to ordain others after them for the supplying the several Orders and Offices in the Church to all future Ages. This *St. Paul* affirms, *Ephes. 4. 11.* *And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers;* and for what end, we are given to understand in the next Verse, *viz. for the perfecting the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* And the three Ministerial Orders of Bishops, Priests (or Presbyters) and Deacons, so often mentioned in *St. Paul's* Epistles, have been happily preserved in the Church ever since the time of the Apostles, and were rightfully and lawfully continued in the Church of England at the time of our Reformation from Popery.

Quest. But pray then, Where had the *Anabaptists* their Authority of Ordaining Ministers? Who gave the Laity the right of Imposition of hands, to Ordain Bishops, Priests, and Deacons?

Ans. The Answer is (I'll warrant you) *They have an inward Call of God.* This is plainly *Buckhold* and *Knipperdoling.* And thus far however they will own their first Reformers.

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At this rate they may have as many Teachers as People; for every one that has but enough of Confidence or blind Zeal, may set up when he will, his Call is good. But I wish such Pretenders wou'd consider the Danger of offering strange Incense, and also what befel *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, for usurping the Priest's Office (*Numb. 16. 10, 31, 32.*)

Quest. And now I'm doing, I must ask 'em another Question or two: If they have no lawful Ministers, where is their lawful Ministry? and then, Where are their Sacraments, if they have not proper Persons to administer them?

And now, my Friend, the Consideration of this matter alone, would sufficiently startle and keep me off from going to this Sect, which is, in deed and in truth, according to the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, no Church at all.

Pray then, good Neighbour, be not so conceitedly foolish as to strain at a Gnat and swallow a Camel. And thus I've paid 'em in their own Coyn, hoping that hereafter they'll let our Church alone; for they have work enough at home, if they will but look to it, to keep their own House clean, they having neither Doctrine, Discipline, nor Worship (as matters are with them) truly Apostolical. If what has been said will not dissuade you from running after those People, I shall however have the inward Satisfaction of doing my Duty, as the Prophet *Ezekiel* speaks, *Chap. 3. v. 19. Since I have given you warning, if you die in your Sins (as doubtless Heresie is a grievous one) your blood must lye at your own door.*

And now (*Neighbour*) I think I might conclude, having already exceeded the usual Limits of a Letter. But forasmuch as the matter I'm upon is the Cause of God and of Truth, is concerning the Welfare of your Soul, and the Peace of my dear Parishioners; I hope you'll excuse me if I go on farther, and examine some Objections made by the *Anabaptists* against our Mother the Church; for I would not willingly leave one Stone in your way, that should in the least make you stumble in your Return home to that Profession of Faith you have been brought up in, which is built upon the Doctrines of the Apostles, Christ Jesus being the chief Corner-stone.

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The chief Objections then of our Adversaries (for so I must term them so long as they prevaricate with the Gospel of Christ) are chiefly two, which they seem the most to insist on in professing or gaining Disciples: both these concern the Sacrament of Baptism.

Obj. 1. That we are mistaken in the Subjects of Baptism, in baptizing of Infants.

Obj. 2. That we are wrong in the manner of Administration, in sprinkling instead of dipping.

I shall speak to these two Objections severally; but forasmuch as my Letter is swoln already too big, if therefore my Answer herein proves not satisfactory (as being too brief) give your particular Reasons of your Dissatisfaction; and if they're not already answered, by the Assistance of Almighty God, you shall not long want another Answer to such Objections as you shall make (if of any weight or moment,) wherein I shall argue the matter with you more at large.

I begin with their first Objection, theirs I say, not yours; for you do the Cause of your Mother the Church great wrong, should you be on the offensive side, when you ought to be on the defensive; 'twould be even unnatural to arraign her, when you ought to plead in her behalf; to join and engage your self with the adverse Party, when in Duty and Prudence you should stand against it: for what will all your Brethren, my Parishioners, and all other indifferent Persons, say of you, shou'd you so shamefully give up the Cause (wherein both your Conscience and your Credit are concern'd) before the same is fairly heard and try'd. But I must go on with the Objection; and as they put it, the strength of it lies in these two things, That there ought to be Faith and Repentance before Baptism: the one, say they, Children cannot have, the other they cannot perform, and so are not capable of receiving this Ordinance. Now to set the matter in question in a true light, I shall examine the two Branches of the Objections separately.

1. As to Faith, I answer, If thereby they mean an actual or outward Profession of Faith is necessary in Children before they can receive the sign of the Covenant, this I deny, and it lies upon them

to prove it; but then I affirm, that Children of believing Parents have such * an imputed Righteousness of Faith as is requisite to entitle them to the initiating Covenant, and so have a right to the Sign or Seal of that Covenant, namely *Baptism*, whereby they're disciplined or initiated into the Christian Profession, and so are made visible Members of Christ's Church. But for the farther clearing of this point, let us compare † Circumcision and Baptism together as they respect those two things; viz.

1. Matter of Fact.
2. Matter of Right.

* I mean an outward or federal Holiness, such as the Jewish Children had.

† Circumcision and Baptism are Seals of

the same Evangelical Covenant; the former given by God to Abraham, the latter given by Christ himself.

Now it cannot be denied but Circumcision was the Seal of the † Evangelical Covenant; and was not that a Covenant of Faith? † Of the yea, doubtless. We have the Authority of St. Paul for it, who promised Messiah to our Father Abraham who was to come. calls it, *Rom. 4. 11. the Seal of the Righteousness of Faith*. And were not (I pray you) Children capable of receiving this Seal of Faith given to Abraham? You answer, Yes: tell me then why not Children of Believers now? or were Infants under the Old Testament more capable of receiving the Seal of Faith then, than Children are now under the Gospel? or was the Seal of this first Covenant of Faith more privilegial and extensive in favour to Abraham and his natural Seed, than the second Seal of the same Covenant is in and through Christ to all those who are of the Faith of Abraham? Who will presume to affirm this?

I'm not ignorant what a Noise the *Anabaptists* make about the Commission our Saviour gave his Apostles in reference to the Sacrament of Baptism; *Go teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of, &c.* They'll tell you, Persons must be taught before they are baptiz'd; but with their Favour, this is not always to be taken in their meaning, but only in the case of adult Persons. Mar. 28. 19.

For if we consider the Etymology and real Signification of the Word *Teach*, in the Original it is *μαθησάτε*; which according to very learned Expositours, signifies also discipling; and then the Commission runs thus, *Go ye, and by Baptism make disciples*. To what end? That they may be taught and instructed in the Duties of the Christian Faith; as will plainly appear if you take the Commission mentioned in the 19th ver. together with what follows in the 20th; and it is thus, *Go ye, Disciple all Nations, baptizing*

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baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching 'em to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. They'll answer, we are only for the literal Sense of the Word. I reply, discipling is also as true a meaning of the Word, if the Original must be judge; but if they do not understand it, or will not believe it, I cannot help that.

And now that we are upon Christ's Commission, let us examine it a little farther, as to the extent of it---*Go ye, Baptize all Nations, &c.* Ask'em what this means, and then they're against the literal Meaning; for we say this Authority must needs reach the Baptism of Infants, if Children are part of the World; and there cannot be all Nations, if they are excluded. No such matter, say they; this Commission extends only to adult Persons of all Nations, who are first to be taught, and then to be baptized. When we urge farther that of the Apostle St. Peter, *The promise is to you and your children*; they answer as before, This is to be understood to you and your Posterity, as when *Moses* speaks of the Children of *Israel*, is meant all Persons of that Stock: and if we agree to this, how then? Are not young Children (I pray ye) part of that Stock? Truly there are not many Families in comparison without them; and if it was otherwise, there would soon be left but few, or no Nations at all.

From the extent of the Commission, let us go ^{to} the Execution of it, and see if that can help to reconcile us. Well then, from Scripture we tell'em of whole Families that were Baptized together, as *Lydia* and her household, the *Jayler* of *Philippi*, he and all his straitway, and how St. *Paul* affirms that he baptized the household of *Stephanas* (1 Cor. 1. 16.) And are they sure there were no Children in these Families.

But farther, there is one thing more I must observe unto you before I leave the Authority of the Scriptures as to this point; that there were three ways of Proselyting among the *Jews*, namely Circumcision, Baptism, and Sacrifice: The first belonged only to the Males, the two latter to all, Men, Women, and Children; and all the Rabbins do with one consent affirm, that Persons of all Ages and Sexes were admitted into the Church by Baptism: In the *Gemara* it is thus expressed: *If with a Proselyte his Sons and his Daughters are made Proselytes also, that which is done by their Father redounds to their good: and again in the Babylonian Talmud, They baptize a little Proselyte according to the Judgment* of

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II

of the *Sabbath*; that is, as the Gloss renders it. If he is deprived of his Father, and his Mother brings him to be profelyted, he is baptiz'd according to the Custom; which was this, there was to be three Men present at his Baptism who were accepted instead of a Father to him.

From hence I observe, That the Custom of Baptism being a thing so common among the *Jews* when they sent Messengers to *John*, the Question was not, *Why dost thou baptize?* which in all likelihood had been the first Question, had not Baptism, with them been so usually a way of discipling; no, but they demand the Authority of the Baptizer, and they asked him and said unto him, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet.* John 1 25.

Hence also I farther observe, that *Pedobaptism* being so common and known a Custom in the Jewish Church, when Multitudes flock'd to *John's* Baptism, who dare positively affirm they did not bring their Children along with them to be baptized? As to our Adversaries alledging, where is it said, *Go, Baptize Infants?* I answer, What need was there to strengthen Baptism with any particular Precept, when it became an Evangelical Sacrament? for that our Saviour took it as he found it, this only added, that he promoted it to a more worthy End, and to a larger Use, to be a Seal of the Covenant of Faith, as Circumcision was before; and to be also the Laver of Regeneration, not only to the Natural Seed of *Abraham*, but to all those who should be of the Faith of our Father *Abraham*; and that there is in some Measure * an imputed righteousness of Faith as well as an actual one, seems to me very plain from *St. Paul*, when he thus argues, *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* 1 Cor 7 14.

I cannot tell what can be meant by this Holiness, but that the Children of believing Parents have a Right and Privilege to the Seal of the Covenant above those of Unbelievers, namely to Baptism, which the Apostle calls the Laver of Regeneration; and this new Birth must suppose a great advantage redounding to them by receiving this Sacrament: and for this I refer you to our Church's Explanation herein touching Baptism, That it is an outward visible Sign of an inward spiritual Grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we

* An outward or formal Holiness.
† These (necessitate congruente) may have private Baptism; but the other, I think, cannot without Sponsors be admitted visible Members of Christ's Church.

receive

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receive the same, and as a Pledge to assure us thereof; and that being by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath, we are hereby made the Children of Grace.

To this add the Common usage in the Church of executing this our Lord's Commission ever since the Apostles days, in all Nations and Countries where the Gospel hath spread it self: and whether the baptizing of Infants has not been the received Doctrine and Practice of all the Churches in general (whether Eastern or Western) I appeal herein to the unanimous consent of the Ancient Fathers; and the same is yet (for any thing I have either read or heard) the Custom of all National Churches in the whole Christian World to this very day: and if we should speak of single Christians (on which I lay no other stress than to discover the presumptuous Confidence of our Adversaries) the Number of those who are for *Pedobaptism*, in comparison of the *Anabaptists*, is as much disparity (I believe I may affirm) as ten thousand Men are to one. And so much as to matter of Fact.

In the next place, we come to matter of Right; and I hope, Neighbour, we need not stand long upon this; for where matter of Fact is by divine injunction, in the same or in a parallel Case, matter of Right cannot be disputed without reflecting upon the Authority of the Lawgiver or Commander. To come then to an issue in this Point, you have heard that the command is general, *Go, Baptize all Nations*; and that Children must be taken as part of that All: and in general Laws the relating of particulars is not required, because Laws always pass on the whole kind, and a part must necessarily be supposed to be included in the whole, as a particular in an Universal.

Besides, I judge the *Anabaptists* themselves are of this opinion in the case of the other Sacrament, the *Lord's Supper*: else why do they admit Women to it? We own, 'tis true, that all ought to celebrate the Lord's Death; but I ask, Where is it particularly commanded that Women are to receive as well as Men? Our Adversaries in this case must clear it thus; They are part of Mankind, Persons for whom Christ died as well as Men, and so are within our Lord's general Precept, *Do this in remembrance of me*. I take this as a good Answer. But then,

I ask them, Why is not the Command in the initiating Seal to be lookt upon as extensive as it is (they being Judges) in the confirming Pledge or Seal? It must needs be as general (with regard

to

to the Precept) else some Persons might receive the Lord's Supper before they're baptized, and so their Confirmation in the Christian Faith might in order of Time precede their Initiation, and those might be admitted Guests at the Lord's Table, who never were really his Disciples ; which none, I think, will allow, that own the Sacraments. And thus it seems plain to me that it must needs follow, if Children are included in the general Precept of Baptism, then they ought of right to be baptized ; for in every Law of God there must be supposed a Reasonableness and Equity in the Performance, because every such Law is the Sanction of Truth and Justice, in as much as the same is enacted by an all-wise Lawgiver.

But here is another Objection thrown in my way, and I fear (*Neighbour*) you'll not let me go on, till 'tis removed ; and 'tis this.

Obj. Say our Adversaries, Now we'll fight you with your own Weapons ; If the Law of the two Sacraments be general, and the one as extensive as the other, why is not the Lord's Supper given to Infants as well as to Men and Women ?

Answer, For very good Reasons 'tis most convenient and necessary, that Children as well as adult Persons, be baptized, that so Christ's Flock may be distinguished from *Jews, Heathens, and Pagans* ; and it shews a wonderful kind Love in our Saviour in bringing those Infants (in whom there is no actual let or hindrance of their own) nearer unto him, by his gracious Ordinances of Baptism, wherein he sets his Seal that *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*. And I the rather believe this, for that when our Saviour was on Earth he manifested such Love and personal Tenderness for them even as a Father, his Words and Actions were both full of Affections towards them ; *He took them up in his arms,* Mark 10. 16. *put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

Add to this, That we are all conceived and born in Sin ; and that *as in Adam all dy'd*, how then ? *so in Christ all should be made alive*, that is (*Salvabiles*) favorable (1 Cor. 15 22.) and without all doubt Children are a part of this All, for whom Christ dyed and rose again. Now this being so, and there being no other means that we know of in an ordinary way, but Baptism, whereby Children have the Grace of the Covenant convey'd unto them, that being

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the outward Seal thereof, and that being also the Laver of Regeneration wherein the Stain of Original Sin is washed away.

This then implies a necessity of their being baptized; and this Doctrine our Saviour himself confirms, when he saith, *John 3. 5. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Except a Man, here must be meant all the Kind of Man, else may Women be excluded as well as Infants. Thus 'tis most reasonable Children should be baptized. But then,

As to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the case is far different; the Reason of the thing shews that there is a great distinction to be made 'twixt a Disciple or one that is newly entred a Scholar in Christ's School, and those who are come to some growth and stature in the Christian Profession: in young Beginners a tractable Disposition or Inclination to learn is accepted; whereas in adult Persons, because more is given so more is required of them; they come to the Lord's Table to renew their baptismal Vow, and to set forth the Lord's Death; they are Guests invited, bid to prepare themselves, and therefore 'tis expected they put on the Wedding-garment: they must go thither with actual Faith and Obedience; they must call themselves to account; and, as our Church piously admonishes such, *They are to examine themselves whether they truly repent them of their former Sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new Life, having a lively Faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and to be in charity with all men.* So that whether we respect the Conditions qualifying a worthy Communicant, or the end of his receiving, that Duty cannot be expected from Babes, but from those who are Proficients, are grown up in the Knowledge and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this I hope you will take as a sufficient Answer to this Objection: and we may therefore go on. Having then shewn, both from matter of Fact, and matter of Right, that Infants ought to be baptized, let us make forward to the second branch of the first Exception against the baptizing of Children, namely Repentance, the Scripture saying, *Repent and be baptized.* This, I hope, will not take us up much time, so pray, *Neighbour*, let us to it.

Obj. Thus then object our Adversaries, and argue upon it, Repentance ought to precede Baptism, but Infants cannot repent, and therefore should not be baptized.

I answer.

I answer, There are two kinds of Sins (generally speaking) Original and Actual: As to the first I say, the Obedience of the second Adam is as extensive as the Prevarication of the first Adam, and that there are no other means revealed unto us to wash off this stain in Infants but Baptism, and so most reasonable and necessary, that they should, as you have heard before, be Partakers of this Sacrament: but of actual Sins, they being not guilty of those, they have no occasion to repent.

So that the Exhortation of St. Peter, *Repent and be baptized*, does not at all concern Infants, but adult Persons; and this will be undeniable, if we observe the occasion and purport of the Discourse preceding the same. So it was, that the Feast of Pentecost being come, and vast numbers of People residing then at Jerusalem to keep the Feast, both Jews and Proselytes of divers Nations, as Parthians, Medes, Elamites, &c. the Apostles being met there also, and assembled together in one of the upper Rooms of the Temple (as their daily custom was) whilst they were performing divine Service, it pleased Almighty God at that time to pour down upon them the miraculous Gift of the Holy Ghost: hereupon they began immediately to speak unto the People in their Master's Name, and upon his Business, in their several Tongues and Languages.

Vid. Dr.
Hammond
on Acts 1.
13. compared
with
cap. 2.
ver. 1.

The Rumour of this brought a mighty Concurrence to them at the Temple. Now the People finding it even so as it was told them, whilst Peter and the rest of the Apostles expounded unto them the Doctrines of the Christian Faith, many of them were convicted in their Consciences at what they had seen and heard, and therefore cried out of a sudden, *Men and Brethren, What shall we do?* Answer was made by Peter and the rest of the Apostles, *Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.* And this plainly shews, that Repentance here required before Baptism was of adult Persons, whether Jews or Proselytes (for in this case they are all one) that they shou'd be heartily sorry for all the actual Sins they had been guilty of, resolve to become new Men, and to believe in the Lord Jesus, that so they might be qualified for Baptism, the initiating Seal of the Covenant of Faith.

This is therefore the Apostolical Doctrine touching the baptizing of adult Persons, they ought to repent and believe, to qualify them for receiving the Seal of the said Covenant: And so

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far our Mother the Church doth agree with the *Anabaptists* (if this is their Doctrine) as may be seen in her Office of Baptism of those of riper Years. Thus the Exhortation before it runs: *Save your selves from this untoward Generation, for that Baptism doth now save not by the putting away the filth of the Flesh, but the answer of a good Conscience.* And the Rubrick expressly requires, That due care be taken for the Examination of such Persons as are to be so baptiz'd, and that they prepare themselves with Prayers and Fasting for this holy Sacrament. I need say no more on this Head; and I hope this Point will give you no occasion to leave the Church. Having then agreed thus well in this matter, I shall be glad if we can close so well in the next Objection, and that is as touching the Manner or Mode of Baptizing.

Second General Objection.

That Dipping, not Sprinkling, is the essential and necessary Mode of the Sacrament of Baptism.

Answer.

In Answer to this Objection, I'll not deny any thing herein that Scripture or Antiquity seems to favour, as to the custom of Immersing or Plunging under Water Persons to be baptiz'd. 'Tis confess'd then, the *Jews* in their proselyting or making Disciples by Baptism, used, I believe, generally to put the Persons to be baptized all under Water, being conformable to their legal Purifications: Thus *Maimonides* speaking of their manner of baptizing, *If any Person* (saith he) *washes or dips himself all over but the tip of his little finger, he is yet in his Uncleaness.* And if any one had much Hair on his head, that was also to be washed, else the Person was reckoned unclean. Suppose farther, that in conformity to the *Jewish* Custom, the Mode of *John's* Baptism was after this manner too, as seems to be inferred from his baptizing in *Jordan* and *Enon*, *because there was much Water there*; and suppose farther, that this Custom continued in the Church for some time after Christ and his Apostles in the hot Countries where yet Dipping of Children might be safe as to Cold; and if it be so in these places (pray ye) who's against it?

What! The Church of *England*? That she is not: for in her Rubrick about the Baptizing of Infants, it is thus ordered; That after the Naming of the Child, the Minister (if they shall certify

tise him the Child may well endure it) shall dip it warily in the Water, saying, *I baptize thee, &c.* So that you see, *Neighbour*, you or any other Person might have your Child dipt at its Baptism openly at the Font in the Church, if the same is desired. here is therefore no Plea left for your separating from our Church upon this account, unless Dipping in the River † *Torn* by a Layman shall be lookt upon to answer better the end of Baptism, than Dipping in the Font by a lawful Minister.

* A River in the Isle of Axholm in Lincolnshire famous for Dipping.

But they'll tell you, that Dipping is Essential to Baptism, and therefore those that have not been dipt have not yet been duly baptized: but this I deny, and let them prove it if they can; and till then, in all reason, you ought to stand to your former Baptism. And I make this fair Offer, Do but continue of our Communion till the *Anabaptists* shall be able, from Scripture, Antiquity, or Reason, to make appear, that Dipping is essentially necessary to baptism (*sine quâ non*) and I shall desire your Conformity no longer.

Here I might very justly lay down my Pen, and at present say no more, the Authority of the Church (I mean not of *England* only, but all or most Christian Churches in the Western and Northern parts of the World) now using the Sprinkling or Pouring Water upon Infants at the time of their Baptism instead of Dipping of them, is methinks sufficient Satisfaction to me, and ought to be so to any indifferent or unprejudic'd Christian, until the contrary is made appear, *viz.* That there is an essential necessity in the very Nature of the Sacrament of Baptism, that Immerging or Plunging be the only Mode of Administration.

Yet on second Thoughts, when I consider I am not disputing against an Adversary, as to whom, I ought to take all reasonable advantage in the way of Argument; but that I am writing to a Parishioner, and a Friend, and am endeavouring to satisfy one under my Charge in some Scruples of Conscience, which is a Duty incumbent upon my Office, upon this Consideration (*Neighbour*) I shall be free'r with you than otherwise I had need to have been, and so will give you some Reasons, why I think Dipping not essentially necessary in the Administration of Baptism. And,

1st. For that I look upon it, there's a vast difference to be made betwixt a legal washing and a sacramental one: *John* indeed, in his Baptism, doth seem to conform to the Jewish Mode of Immerging; and this Symbol might truly better comport with the then.

* Being
grown very
corrupt by
their Su-
perstitious
Traditions.

Acts 2. 39.

then present Circumstances of those his Disciples, who were polluted with an outward, and as it were visible Stain (as well as an inward one) either of * *Judaism* or *Heathenism*: but now (thank God) the case is far otherwise (the very name of a *Jew* or an *Heathen*, being among us in the Country a strange thing) the Subjects of Baptism, generally speaking, are now the Offspring of Christian Parents, and to it there is a promissory Right or Title included in the Grace of this Covenant: *The promise is to you and your Children*, in whom there remains no legal or outward Impurity.

But now to come to the point in question, why should not a little Water, as well as a great deal, represent the inward washing of the Spirit to Infants at their Baptism, who are after a sort clean before, as being of the stock of Believers? So the Apostle, *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy*. For instance herein, by way of Simile; Was I to sign you a Bond, would not the impress of a little Wax, the bigness of my finger's-end, make the Condition of the Bond as good and as sure unto you, to all intents and purposes, as if it had been stamp't with a Seal ten times as big? Now in the reason of the thing, Why should not a little Water be as good a Seal of the Covenant of Baptism, as a greater quantity? and why is not the inward washing of the Spirit as virtually represented in a small quantity of Water, as well as Christ's Body and Blood in a little quantity of Bread and Wine? The excess herein was the Fault of the *Corinthians*, and justly condemned by the Apostle; but I never understood 'twas a Crime to eat or drink sparingly at the Lord's Table, for that the food there is sacramental, and the strengthening and refreshing of our Souls by the Body and Blood of Christ is to be lookt at, and not the strengthening of our Bodies by the Bread and Wine: should any think otherwise, I must stop their Mouths with St. Paul's Question, *Have you not houses to eat and drink in, or despise you the Church of God?* &c.

1 Cor. 11.
22.

So in the other Sacrament we are not so much to look at the outward Circumstances of it (*viz.*) how much or how little Water is necessary towards its due Administration, as to consider the Design and End of it, and not the outward washing of the Body of the Person baptiz'd, the putting away the filth of the Flesh (as St. Peter speaks) which might require more or less Water for its Purification, according to the Stature, Age, or Uncleaness of the Person.

Person to be wash'd : for the use of Water in this Sacrament is symbolical and representative of the inward washing of the Spirit at the time of Administration ; *It is an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual Grace, given unto us, and ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof :* and so a little Water doth as virtually represent the Operation of the Spirit in the new Birth, as well as a little Bread and Wine doth represent unto us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper the Operation of the same Spirit in exhibiting to us spiritually the Body and Blood of Christ, in order to strengthen and confirm in us the new Birth, that we may thereby be enabled to walk in newness of Life.

2dly, To this add,

* The reasonableness of this Custom being alter'd from Dipping to Sprinkling, (even necessity herein compelling ;) for in our cold and Northern Climates shou'd all the Children (and those are the most who want baptizing now) be dip't, well truly they might be said, in a literal sense, to be buried with Christ in their Baptism ; the washing ~~was~~ of Regeneration might be the cause of sending them to their Graves. But God loves and delights in Mercy more than in Sacrifice ; and therefore that Commission which our Saviour gave in order to the health of our Souls, we cannot, without manifest prejudice to the gracious intention of the Lawgiver, suppose he wou'd have so executed as to indanger the health of our Bodies.

* Upon this very account the Anabaptists in Holland do only pour Water upon or dip the Head.

Upon this very Account also, we read that the *Sanhedrim* of the *Jews* was petitioned, that Dipping in their Female Purgations might be taken away ; For what Cause ? For that the Women of *Galilee*, by reason of the Cold they then got, became barren. Did the *Galileans* pity their menstruous Women, and shall not Christ have compassion of his poor Babes, to whom, when on Earth, he made such kind Promises, gave such tender Embraces, and his Divine Blessing, and was so angry they should be kept from him.

In fine, I shou'd never condemn any Person for desiring to have his Child dip'd ; but shou'd he stand upon it as of the Essence of the Sacrament (*sine qua non*) that I think would argue his hankering too much after the legal and Judaical Washings ; his putting too much stress on the outward Element of Water ; which is but the visible Sign ; and his slighting the thing signified ; (*viz.*) the

the inward invifible Grace, the fecret Wafhing and Purification made by the Spirit at the time of Adminiftration. I fhall conclude this Point with the Judgment of an Ancient Father, when confulted upon this very account: his words are thefe; *That Immerfion in Baptifm is now generally difufed in thefe parts of the World, and Sprinkling fucceeds in its room, becaufe the tender Bodies of moft Infants (the only Perfons now to be baptized) could not be put under water in thefe cold Northern Climates without apparent prejudice to their Health, if not their Lives.* And therefore in this, as in other cafes, God requires Mercy rather than Sacrifice; efpecially confidering that the main Ends of Baptifm are attained this way, and the myftical Effects thereof, as virtually represented by Sprinkling ^{as} Dipping. And to this Mode of Baptizing the Prophet *Ezekiel*, chap. 36. ver. 25, 26. feems prophetically to refer, when he faith, *Then will I sprinkle clean Water upon you, and ye fhall be clean from all your Filthinefs; and a new Heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you.*

Now what has been faid upon this Head, will, I hope, fatisfie you (*Neighbour*) and all other Perfons that are not wilfully prejudic'd againft Reason and Truth: and as for fuch who are refolved to diflent and wrangle on whatever is faid or whatever is proved, I fhall advife 'em to confult *St. Paul* for an Answer that may be more fatisfactory; namely, *If any man feems to be contentious, we have no fuch cuftom, neither the Churches of God,* 1 Cor. 11. 16.

And now (*Neighbour*) having gone through the Particulars I was to fpeak to, and having alfo fairly answered fome of the main Objections our Adverfaries (the *Anabaptifts*) chiefly infift on; I fhall only leave the whole matter before you in order as it is written, with fome ufeul Inferences, and fo conclude.

In the Introductory Part of my Letter, I gave you to underftand, that there is fuch a thing as Men call an Erroneous Confcience, and that there is a Zeal fometime which is not according to Knowledge; and hence I infer what a prudent and fober-minded Christian ought to do, when he had fome Scruples upon him before he left the Communion of the Church he was in: he ought firft, from Scripture and Reason, to examine into the Validity of the Scruples that feem to diffuade him from his former Profeffion;

Profession; and when he has done the best he can herein, if his Scruples still grow upon him, before he quits his old way, he shou'd then, by all due ways and means examine into the Truth and Safety of the new way propos'd unto him instead of the old one, else it may so happen, that his Change may be for the worse, and this no wise Man wou'd make.

Now, in the making this Examination, I put you in this way for finding out whether your old Profession or the new propos'd one was the better; I advis'd you to consult the holy Scriptures (the Standard of Truth) and thereby try your old Religion and your pretended new one, and see which of them is purer in Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship: and if, upon a Fair hearing of the Cause, the old one should prove the better, it would then be clear you ought not in prudence to change; and till this is done, you are to keep to your old way. And,

For the more orderly trying this Cause, our Adversaries being Complainants, and accusing our Church of false Doctrines, it lies upon them to prove what those Doctrines are, and what be those unlawful Terms of Communion she requires, that are not justifiable by the Word of God; and till then we are to keep our Ground, and to act only as Defendants in the Cause, no Man being by Law bound to accuse himself. And he that voluntarily espouses a Quarrel against the Religion he has been brought up in, without knowing first, why and wherefore, acts the part of a weak, not to say a contentious, Christian; and 'tis a true Maxim, *He that accuses another of dishonesty, ought to look to himself in the first place*: Therefore in dealing with our Adversaries (who are so free of their obloquies) I took this Method, pursuant to the proverbial Saying now mentioned, and so inquired what pretence they have for the Truth; for if they are in the wrong, there's no colour for your joyning with them, what ever there may be for your leaving the Church: for suppose, for Argument sake, the way you have been in is not good; yet if the new way you are invited to be worse, 'tis madness to change: so that be the Title naught, that in possession by the Courtesie of all Laws, is to be look't upon the best, and ought to be so esteem'd, until a better is prov'd. In examining then into the Goodness and Truth of their Cause in Matter of Religion, I took this Method,

1st. I gave the Character of those Persons who were the first

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Broachers

Anabaptism Considered.

Broachers of this Sect of the *Anabaptists*; and this (*Neighbour*) is a very material thing to be considered: For suppose I had a journey to take of great Consequence, and being a Stranger to the way, some Persons come, and do very officiously offer themselves to be my Guide, pretending they understand the Road very well, and are making to the same place; well surely in this case, before I give my self up to their Guidance and Conduct, I shou'd know who they are, enquire into their character, whether they are (*boni & legales Homines*) honest and true Men, and shou'd I find them otherwise, it wou'd be very madness to take them for Guides, let them pretend never so fairly: For thus has many an honest Man been choust out of his Money (and sometimes his Life too) by the fair Speeches of Thieves and Robbers. In this Case, he that values his own safety shou'd with all speed rid himself of their Company, and while he may without hazard, bid them adieu. Now,

To bring this matter home, I have let you know, what the first Setters-up of this Sect were; when and where it was they cry'd up their stupendous Doctrine, *Repent and be re-baptized, or else you are damn'd*; what horrid Exploits they play'd, what Barbarous Acts they were guilty of, how they sack'd and plundered all before them, filling all the places wherever they came with Blood and Confusion at *Leyden, Munster, Amsterdam, Utrecht*, and other places. Now this is matter of Fact, and cannot be denied; and pray what think you of these new Guides? Is it safe to follow them? Did Christ and his Apostles ever take these methods to plant the Doctrines of the Christian Religion? And shou'd it be alledged, that the present Leaders of the *Anabaptists* are other sort of Men; I answer, Where there are the same Principles, there wants nothing but Power and Opportunity to produce the same Effects. And this brought me,

2^{ly}. To consider what Doctrines they taught. They held that Christ was not the true God; to this let them take St. *John's* answer, *Who is a liar but he that denyeth that Jesus is the Christ?* He is Antichrist that denyeth the Father and the Son.

They taught also that we are to be saved by our own Merits and Sufferings, and that there is no Original Sin; and this takes away the Merit of our Saviour's Intercession, and the Satisfaction that he made on our behalf. They excluded Infants out of the Grace of the Covenant, contrary to our Lord's command, denying

1 John 2.
22.

nying them Baptism, which is a *Means whereby we receive the same, and a Pledge to assure us thereof*. They held it lawful for a Man to have more Wives than one; and this shews their Continence and Chastity; that the godly was to inherit the Earth; and Oaths not to be kept with the Magistrate; and this discovers their Principles of Civil Government: That any Person might take upon him the Ministerial Office; and this invades our Saviour's Authority he left with the Apostles and their lawful Successors in this behalf. But enough of the Doctrines of this new way.---I went on,

3dly. And shewed that the present Methods our Adversaries usually take in managing their Cause argues that the same is naught, for that they are always inveighing against the Doctrines or Practice of others, instead of proving from Scripture and Reason the Truth and Goodness of their own way. To this add the great Confidence (without Reason) they have of their Cause; and that being buoy'd-up with Ignorance and Prejudice, what a noise and pomper they make in promoting it, as if they were so many *Goliath's* in arguing, that none could stand before them.

Witness the late confident and presumptuous Challenge they made at *Epworth*, to enter into a publick Dispute with the Reverend Mr. *Wesly* the present Minister thereof, who is indeed (the Effect of his good Nature) too civil to them, and too much forbearing of their insolent Behaviour, in confronting the establish'd Religion, in Opposition and open Defiance to the wholesome Laws of the Land, made and provided for the Honour and Security of the same.

But let me tell them, They who do not value the Peace of the Church, will never regard the Peace of the State: But we desire no more of their *Munster*-broyls, occasioned by their seditious Disputations; therefore 'tis good for them not to use their liberty for a cloak of Maliciousness; for if they will so far tread in the steps of their first Reformers as to intrench upon the Authority and kind Indulgence of the Magistrate, they must be let understand, *that he beareth not the Sword in vain*. And as for their *Goliath's* Arguments, let them not produce them as is their common usage in a seditious and tumultuous manner, where noise shall prevail above Truth and Reason, but in a manly and christian way, and we fear them not; for I do not doubt but when their Locks of Pride and Ignorance (where their boasted Strength lies) are

lop'd off, they'll be found in Argument like other Men, and those of the meanest Rank too.

Thus (*Neighbour,*) if you will but seriously consider the Men, or their Principles, or their manner of spreading and abetting of them, I hope you will think it most adviseable to keep to your old way, until a better than this before us is shewn you to walk in: and thus we might (as I told you) stand our ground, and act only defensively. But being 'tis the Cause of God and Truth, and the design of this Letter being not so much to assail our Adversaries, as to satisfy your Scruples, which if not solid, are at least, I believe, well meant; I put the Cause still to a fairer Issue, and laid before you the Strength of our Adversaries in the two main Objections.

1st. As to the Objects of Baptism.

2^{dly}. As to the manner of its Administration.

As to the first Objection, I shew'd you the Stress of it lay in this, That Faith and Repentance shou'd precede Baptism, which Children not being capable of, are not to be baptized: and that none of the force of the Objection should be lost in the handling of it, I took it in pieces, and spoke severally to the Branches of it.

And first, as to Faith, I shew'd you by way of parallel, that Circumcision in the old Testament being a Seal of the righteousness of Faith, of which Infants were then capable, it must needs follow by parity of Reason that Children of Believers under the Gospel, must be also capable of Baptism which is the Seal of the New Testament, unless they will suppose that the first Seal of the Covenant given to *Abraham* was more privilegial and extensive in favour, than the second Seal given by Christ. I shew'd farther, as matter of Fact, That Children, as well as Men and Women, were always discipled by Baptism in the *Jewish* Church, and that Children were included in our Lord's general Commission, they being part of *all Nations*: And that the manner of executing this Commission in all Nations wherever the Christian Faith hath spread it self ever since the Apostles Days, and in all probability in their time also doth ascertain the matter of Fact as to the baptizing of Infants beyond all denial.

For matter of Right, I shew'd you that Infants have an unquestionable Title to the thing signified, of such being, as our Saviour saith, the Kingdom of Heaven, who can question their having a
right

right to the sign? besides that the Promise is to you and your Children, and that the promissory Grace in the Sacrament is no ways letted by the personal Incapacity of the Recipient, for that a King may be crown'd in a Cradle, and become really King, though he knows not of it; and many Kindnesses may be actually done to Infants, by their Parents, Friends, or Guardians, though they are not privy to it; and however at the least, Children now of believing Parents are every whit as capable of the Seal of Baptism as the Children of the *Jews* were of the Seal of Circumcision, as was before declar'd, and for the Reasons there alledged.

As to the second branch of their first Exception, *Repentance*.

I shew'd you very plainly, that it concerns adult Persons only; for Infants having not been guilty of actual Sins, there is no occasion for their actual Repentance; and as for Persons of riper Years (if they're not baptized till then) we do agree they ought first to believe; for it would be most unreasonable to admit an adult Person Christ's Disciple, who did not first believe in him and acknowledge him for his Saviour; and that there is also in these a necessity of Repentance; for such having been also guilty of actual Sins, they ought and must repent of them, before they are capable of this Sacrament which is the Laver of Regeneration; and he that puts on Christ must become a New Creature. I came then,

To the second general Objection relating to the Mode of Baptism, and did so far agree, that Dipping was probably the manner of baptizing in the *Jewish* Church, and that the same was likely so too in *John's* Baptism; but then I shew'd you there was at that time a particular Reason for this Mode of baptizing, for that the Persons then to be baptized had, as it were, a visible, or outward Uncleaness upon them, namely *Judaism* or *Heathenism*. I agree farther, that this Custom was probably in use in hot Countries some time after Christ and his Apostles, where the same might be done without endangering the Health of the baptized: and I shew'd you also that our Church is not against this use when it may be done with safety, as appears by her *Rubrick* of Baptism.

But then to urge, that this Mode of dipping is Essential in the very nature of the Sacrament, that I deny'd, and put it to the *Anabaptists* to prove it if they could; and did say, and do say still, that a little Water in Baptism, by sprinkling or pouring the same upon

upon the Person baptized, doth as virtually and sacramentally exhibit the Seal of the Covenant, as the greatest quantity whatsoever; even as I shew'd you by the like parity of Reason, that a little Bread and Wine, the least Sup, as well as the biggest Draught, in the other Sacrament, doth sufficiently represent the Body and Blood of Christ to every worthy Communicant; and hereupon did urge farther, that for any Person to insist upon Dipping as essential to the Sacrament of Baptism, it seem'd to me to be a leaning too much to the Judaical Washings, and putting too much stress upon the outward Sign (the Element of Water) and a slighting the thing signified, the inward washing and invisible operations of the Spirit. I shew'd you what was the Judgment of an ancient Father of the Church when consulted on this occasion, and what was and is the Practice of all, or most, Christian Churches in the Western and Northern parts of the World: and now in the close I shall refer the whole matter of this Letter to your serious and Christian Consideration, with this Caution only, that you bear always in mind, in the perusal of it, *St. Paul's Advice to Timothy; Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* To conclude,

2 Tim. 2.
14.

Thus (Neighbour) you see, upon due enquiry made, there's really nothing in the new way we have been speaking of to invite you to it, unless Principles of Sedition, Heresie and Schism, can be any due Motives herein. No, the Apostle *St. Paul* positively affirms, that they who upon this account cause Divisions in the Church of God, are such as love not our Lord Jesus Christ, but that by their *good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.* Pray then, be not led away with an outward shew of pretended Sanctity and Holiness, for such a Vizard the false Teachers were to put on. 'Tis our Saviour's own Affirmation, that there should arise *false Christs and false Prophets*, who should be so artful in their counterfeit shews of Piety, as to go near imposing upon the very Favourites of Heaven, the Elect or chosen of God.

Rom. 16.
18.

Mat. 24.
24, 25.

Take therefore our Lord's Advice herein; *If they shall say unto thee, he is in the desert, go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chamber, believe it not.* For when the Root is unsound, the Branches must be so likewise: A corrupt Tree may bring forth Fruit fair to the eye, but not really good. Where the Doctrines
of

Anabaptism Considered.

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of any Se^t are against God's Word (as 'tis plain the *Anabaptists* are) they are none of Christ's, let them pretend what they will. Hear what our Lord bids us do in this case, *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

And as there is nothing in the new way, things rightly considered, to invite you to it, so you have heard there is nothing in the old way, the good old Religion you have been baptized and brought up in, to dissuade you from it. All the Objections our Adversaries have yet made are vanish'd, and fled as Chaff before the Wind. Truth is great, and will prevail. If you are therefore a Lover of God and of Christ, of Truth and of your own Soul, hold fast to your former Profession without wavering, and our Lord Jesus Christ give you a right Understanding in all things.

Which is the sincere and hearty Prayer of

Hatfield,

Jan. 19. 1⁶⁹⁹_{700.}

Your loving Friend and Minister,

William Eratt.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

I Am told (*Neighbour*) by several, that you seem concern'd, for that you hear I'm angry at you. Now to be free with you, and that you may have no more occasion to listen to Hear-say, I tell you frankly I am in some measure really so: but that I may not be misunderstood in this, you must give me leave herein to express my own Meaning; and this is but common Justice, every Man being suppos'd the best Interpreter of his own words.

In order then that you or any other Person may the better understand my Meaning when I say *I am angry at you*, I shall consider the matter two ways, with regard to an unjust or a just Anger: and the Word bears these two senses in the common Usage of it, and so 'tis also taken in Holy Writ. To these I shall speak a little severally.

1. As to unjust Anger, taken in a strict sense, it imports, properly speaking, not so much an Evil, as a groundless and hasty Passion. The former of these our Saviour condemns, when he tells us, *We must not be angry with our Brother without a cause*; of the latter I take the elder Son in the Gospel to be guilty; for though his Anger, with regard to his prodigal Brother, might not be altogether groundless, yet was it too rash and hasty.

The Thoughts of his Brother having wasted his Father's Goods in riotous living, gave cause of just Resentment; but then the consideration of his being reform'd, of his becoming a new Man, of his being return'd home in his Person, but not in his Vices, which moved the tenderness of a Father to pardon, should also, if it had been well considered, have prevail'd with the Brother too not to have been angry: the greater Good shou'd have out-balanced the lesser Evil; and so the occasion of the Father's Mirth shou'd have stirr'd up Joy in the Brother also, and not a fretting Passion, being grounded upon this solid Reason, *For this thy Brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found*.

Luke 15.
28, 32.

I am, alas! too much Man to clear my self of having been never guilty of both these two foolish Passions, a Groundless and Hasty Anger; and, to take up the words of holy *Job*, *Should I justify*

justify my self herein, my own mouth would condemn me. Job 9. 20.
No, far be that Presumption from me; but I must freely with
the Apostle own my self of like Passions with other men. Acts 14. 15.

Now as to the latter instance of an hasty Passion, I wish I
might with the elder Brother be blam'd and condemn'd by all
good Men, shou'd I be angry when I ought to rejoyce if my
straying Brother who was lost should be found and return
home. And so much for unjust Anger in the aforementioned
respects.

But then there's an unjust Anger which goes farther, and may
come within the Verge of a malicious Temper. Now should
any be so uncharitable as to insinuate from my saying *I was an-
gry at you*, that I maliciously intended you an ill turn, the occa-
sion of it might be supposed one of these two things; either
it was in prejudice to your Person, or in pique to the Sect of
the *Anabaptists* which you seem inclining to: As to both which,
I thus apologize for my self.

1. As to a malicious Temper: I appeal to all my Neigh-
bours, whether ever my Carriage or Behaviour among them has
deserv'd such a Censure. That I have been ever ready upon all
occasions to serve my Parishioners, and to do them any kindness
that lay in my power, I promise my self so much, that every
one of them (not excepting *John Woodward*) wou'd (if need
require) averr in my behalf.

2. As to any bitterness of Spirit towards Dissenters from the
Church, with that I hope none can justly charge me; and I
put the Question to your self, Whether all the last Year, in
your Converse with me (when Church-warden) you ever at
any time heard me rail against any Persons whatsoever that
differ'd with me in point of Religion. (This then being pre-
mised,)

I must tell you there's a great difference to be made betwixt
one who has all his Life-time been brought up a Dissenter
(whom Education and Custom has so far blinded that he can-
not easily, if he would, discern and embrace the Truth) and a
Person that out of an unadvised and wilful Humour runs away
from the Church, and knows not *Why* or *Wherefore*.

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The first is an Infirmary, and is really to be pitied; the other is a Disease, and so proper means are to be made use of in order to a Cure. Now in this case, all gentle Methods are first to be taken; and he must be reckon'd an unwise or an unfaithful Physician, that shou'd do otherwise: but if all this is done, and the Disease still grows worse and worse, turns to a malignant Distemper, and threatens Danger to the Publick,

In such an Extremity, when the Infection cannot be cured, it has always been thought advisable to shut up or remove the Person infected, though never so near a Friend. And I think I may herein, without being guilty of a Droll or lightness of Expression in so serious a matter as is now before us, apply the common Proverb, which is as true as plain, *That one scabb'd Sheep may infect a whole Flock.* But,

2. There's a just Anger. And of this sort we have sufficient Examples in Holy Writ; and thus *Jacob* did justly resent *Rachel's* too forward Petition, *Give me children, or else I die*; as if that Blessing had been absolutely in the Power of Man; and therefore *Jacob's* Anger was kindled against *Rachel*, (though 'tis known he loved her well) and he said, *Am I in God's stead? who has withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?* Genesis 30. ver. 1, 2.

And so was *Moses* justly displeased at *Korah* and his Company for their presumptuous usurping the Priest's Office, and private tampering with the People, to set them a murmuring against *Moses* and *Aaron*, their Governour and their Priest.

Thus did our Blessed Saviour unkindly resent the Abuse of the Temple, the House of Prayer, in the Peoples profaning of it by their merchandizing in the same; his Words and his Actions shew this: *He cast out them that bought and sold in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, saying, my house shall be called of all nations the house of Prayer, but ye have made it a den of Thieves,* Mark 11. 15, 17.

And thus is God Almighty said to be angry with his People, when they offend either by their Words or Actions. And to give you another Instance; When the People, out of a pretence of greater Holiness, dissented from the publick Worship, made their

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their private Sacrifices, and offered strange Incense. Now as to the Crime, and how God Almighty resented it, hear from his own Word; *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious People which walketh in a way that was not good, (after their own Thoughts) a People that provoketh me to Anger continually to my face (and how was this?) that sacrificeth in Gardens and burneth Incense upon brick, which say, Stand by thy self, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: these are a smoak in my nose, and a fire that burneth all day.*

Isai: 65. 2. 3. 5.

From what has been urged on this Head I infer, That in some cases there is a very just Anger. Thus Magistrates may, and ought, sharply to reprehend all seditious and villainous Practices. So also Parents disobedient Children, Masters unruly Servants, and the Ministers of God's Word ought to tell the People under their charge of their Faults: *Cry aloud and spare not* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 58. ver. 1.) *shew my People their transgressions*, (and these related to Errours in Principles as well as Practice:) so I also as a Minister of the Gospel (though one, God knows, the unworthiest of my Brethren) do think I fall a share in this Authority or Power of reprehending Errours in my Parishioners, whether of Opinion or otherwise.

And in this Case, and upon this Account, I am angry with you, who having lived so long in the Communion of our Church, who the very last Year performed the Office of *Church-warden*, and I must needs say, did, I believe, according to your Oath, and the best of your Knowledge, honestly discharge your self herein; who was the same Year confirmed by the Bishop, and did then, (if you understood your Duty therein) renew your Baptismal Vow, and promise to remain stedfast in your holy Profession. Add to this, your frequent receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is or ought to be the Seal of our Confirmation in the Faith and Doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now for you to have done all this, and as soon as ever you was out of Office of *Church-warden*, to run away from the Church, from your Baptism, from the late solemn Confirmation thereof, from the Communion with your Brethren at the

Lord's Table, and never to tell your Minister *Why* or *Wherefore* you did it, is to me very unaccountable; as if the Profession of our Church was so groundless and so despicable, that nothing cou'd be said for it worth your regarding.

But now to see how the Case is alter'd is admirably strange: You are already more civil to your new way; witness what you said Yesterday at Mr. Pryms, among your Neighbours; namely, That did I come, you had nothing to say to me: but, if I pleas'd, one of your Teachers should give me a meeting, and dispute it out with me. In the name of Goodness what a shame is it, that you should already be so muffled and blinded, as to pin your Faith on another Man's sleeve!

It not this plain Confession, you have forsaken your old way, and taken a new one, and you know not *Why* or *Wherefore*. This is not according to the Apostle St. Peter's Rule, which bids us *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you the reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

It had indeed been a decent and modest Answer, with regard to your old Profession you had so long liv'd in, had you told your new Teachers thus: *Sirs, before I turn, you must give me leave to advise first with my own (or some more able) Minister, and then you shall hear farther from me.*

But to say, with respect to your new way, You refer me to your Teachers, discovers the Sandiness of the Foundation you build upon: 'Tis a Popish Principle, and argues an implicit Faith. This very plainly shews, that you are become one of those St. Paul speaks of when he thus declares,

The time shall come when Men will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves Teachers, having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turn'd to fables, 2 Tim. 4. 3, 4.

I cannot but farther take notice of the indecent, not to say censorious, Expression that you left me last night as a bone to pick on; viz. *That you would stay no longer, for that you loved not the works of darkness.*

Pray what do you mean? If you speak it with respect to me, I desire to know what are those black and hellish Deeds you have to lay to my charge: A God's-name speak out, and

no more than you know is true, and I ask you no Indulgence.

But if you would insinuate into my People a Belief of things that are false, this I must needs say is neither Christian nor fair dealing.

If by the *Works of Darknes* you meant, that I, which regard to my Profession, am a *blind Guide*, and so those that follow me, like Men iⁿ the dark, must fall in the Ditch.

I answer, That I believe those of my Parishioners who were with me last Night, and heard what I said, did not think so. I add farther, however the Cause I have taken upon me to justify may suffer by my Weakness or Inability in its Management.

I must tell you, the Light of the Church you have left, and so much despise, will shine bright as the Sun in the Firmament, when your new Lamp, having spent all its drossy Oyl, shall be quite extinguish'd, and leave only an unpleasant smell behind it; shall vanish in Smoak and Stench.

Now to prevent your rash censuring after this manner for the future, a Talent peculiar and remarkable in the Sect you are inclining to. I advise you to bear in mind what the Apostle says, *Why dost thou judge thy Brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy Brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ.*

Those things consider'd, I cannot but think I've a just Cause to resent and be angry at your too forward and indiscreet Zeal. But then,

By way of Apology in your behalf, I consider also (*Humanum est errare*) Mistake is a common Infirmity, and demands a Christian Compassion and Forbearance, so that a Man does not persist wilfully in his Faults; for when any one's Errours are detected, he ought and must own and forsake them: and the doing this is so far from being a shame, that 'tis Manly and Christian.

Pray then (*Neighbour*) do not tie up your Reason and your Conscience, but give your self the freedom of Thinking and Judging, the only distinguishing Character of a reasonable Man. 'Tis yet in your power to do your self and your Church Justice: and I have already learn'd from *St. Paul* how to behave my self towards a penitent Offender; *Brethren, if any Man*
be

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be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.

What remains, but to beg of God to give you Grace to return home; and me your Minister, and all your Brethren, my Parishioners, Grace also to receive you again as we ought. Which is the unfeigned prayer of,

*From Valkenburgh-
Hall in the Levels,
Jan. 30. 1699.*

Yours as before,

W. E.

FINIS.

